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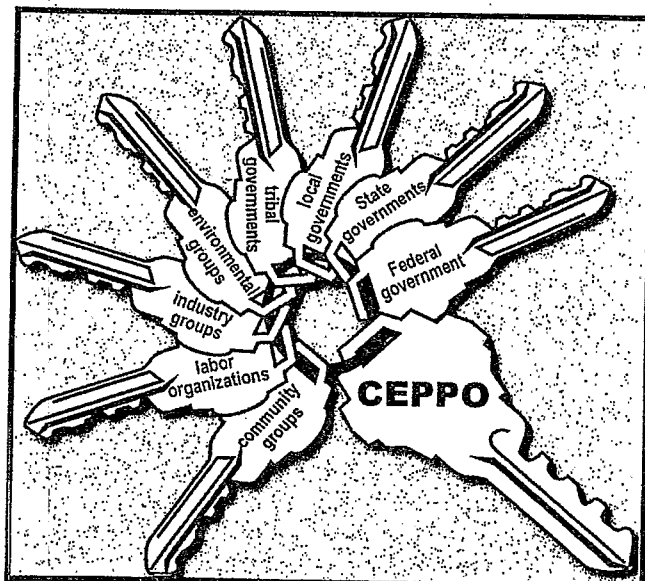
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EPA's Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention Office



Environmental safety is everyone's responsibility. In recent years, one aspect of this broad field has come into sharp focus: the safe handling of chemicals. Following an incident in 1984 in Bhopal, India, which killed more than 2,000, initiatives have sprung up in public and private sectors to determine how we maintain the quality of life and still manage chemicals safely. EPA has taken a leading role in building programs to respond to and prevent chemical accidents. EPA's activities in these areas come together in its Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention Office (CEPPO), organized in 1985.

The CEPPO Difference

CEPPO created a program with substantial flexibility that emphasizes cooperation with its partners rather than command-and-control approaches. We recognize that the fundamental responsibility for protecting public safety rests with State and local governments and with industry. We believe that emergency planners, with their intimate knowledge of local conditions and the business community, are in the best position to work with facilities to reduce chemical hazards and risks and to take action to prevent incidents.

CEPPO's Mission

EPA's Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention Office (CEPPO) provides leadership, builds partnerships, and offers technical assistance to:

- Prevent and prepare for chemical emergencies;
- Respond to environmental crises;
- Inform the public about chemical hazards in their community; and
- Investigate chemical accidents

Local Risk, Local Action, Local Benefit

Prevention, preparedness, and response to accidental releases of hazardous chemicals can only be dealt with effectively at the local level. When Congress enacted the Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act, also known as Title III of the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (SARA), they reaffirmed the basic premise of the work that EPA had conducted previously with State and local governments.

Experience has shown that emergency preparedness improves when local stakeholders share information and participate in environmental decision-making. To that end, CEPPO works with numerous Federal, State, local, and Tribal governments; industry groups; environmental groups; labor organizations; and community groups to help them better understand the risks posed by chemicals in their communities, to manage and reduce those risks, and to deal with emergencies.

Partnerships to Improve Safety

CEPPO works with its State and local partners to develop new, streamlined approaches to deal with emergency preparedness and accident prevention. CEPPO assists Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs) and State Emergency Response Commissions (SERCs) by providing national leadership, issuing regulations, developing technical guidance, and offering grants to enable SERCs and LEPCs to develop their own emergency preparedness and prevention systems.

The relationship forged among government, industry, public interest groups, and the public provides access to information about the presence of hazardous chemicals and for representation in the local decision-making process through their LEPCs.

CEPPO also works closely with the National Response Team to help States and localities better prepare for, respond to, and prevent accidents. The NRT consists of 16 Federal agencies with interests and expertise in various aspects of emergency response to pollution incidents.

When a major chemical accident occurs, EPA works with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the new Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board to determine the causes and contributing factors associated with chemical accidents and to prevent their recurrence.

Better Customer Service

CEPPO works effectively to meet our customer needs. Our office structure allows us to involve our State, Regional, local, and industry partners from the time regulations are written through the implementation phase. CEPPO's Program Development staff writes regulations and provides technical assistance and guidance to community-based emergency planners and industry, while the Program Implementation and Coordination staff ensures that our partners have an opportunity to help shape our programs. Our outreach efforts are designed to educate stakeholders and to keep in close touch with our various State/local/industry partners to gain their valuable input on our programs.

CEPPO's site on the World Wide Web features links to general information and subject-specific data about Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act, risk management planning requirements of the Clean Air Act, up-to-date information on chemical accidents, as well as publications, regulations, conference listings, and links to other databases to help regulators, SERCs, LEPCs, industry, and the public find out more about chemical emergency preparedness and accident prevention. Access the information at <http://www.epa.gov/swercepp>.

Roadmap To the Future

In 1990, the Clean Air Act Amendments responded to the public's concern about what could be done to prevent chemical accidents from occurring in their communities. New regulations require industry to tell EPA and States how they manage chemical risks and what they are doing to reduce risk to the community.

CEPPO is developing important prevention programs with our partners:

- **Risk Management Plans - RMPs**, due from industry in June 1999, require certain facilities to tell the public and CEPPO what they are doing to prevent accidents, how they plan to operate safely and whether they are managing their chemicals in a responsible way.
- **RMP*Submit/RMP*Info** - Summaries of Risk Management Plans will be submitted by industry electronically using new software called RMP*Submit. That information will be available to the public on a new database, RMP*Info. The data will be useful to environmental groups, State and local agencies, community organizations, and the public in understanding the chemical risks in their communities.
- **Counter Terrorism** - Incidents such as the deliberate chemical release in Tokyo, Japan have highlighted the need to ensure that local emergency response plans consider this possibility however slight it may be for any specific community. While the U.S. government has structures and mechanisms in place to address this situation, State and local emergency responders need to be well prepared. CEPPO is working with communities on how local emergency plans can address deliberate chemical releases and provide suggestions for rapid response.

Visit the CEPPO Home Page:
<http://www.epa.gov/swercepp>

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